Northern religious organizations and philanthropists sent agents and magnificent sums of money to construct, literally, the structure of black public education in the South during the seven decades after the Civil War.1 As a non-Confederate border state, Delaware had a public educational system for both races by the 1870s, but never gained significant assistance from northern foundations.2 Despite the lack of outside assistance, however, Delaware’s public school system was totally revamped and all black schools rebuilt by the 1920s. This was achieved by a combination of state legislation and the $6,000,000 gift to the state’s schools by Pierre S. du Pont (1870–1954). While du Pont is best known nationally as the man who “made” the modern Du Pont Corporation, he is equally famous to Pennsylvanians for his development of Longwood Gardens southwest of Philadelphia where he lived from 1906 until his death. From his Longwood farmhouse and his Wilmington apartment in the Du Pont Building, du Pont oversaw the expansion of educational opportunity for Delaware’s schoolchildren through his leadership and his gifts. There can be no doubt that du Pont’s money made a difference to black youth, but at what cost to democracy and black’s dependency upon the whites?

Delaware’s school system in 1918 was in poor shape for both


races. Local funds and local control had produced a conglomeration of 450 school districts in a state of 200,000 people. The state compulsory law, passed only in 1907, remained unenforced. School financing relied heavily upon the ancient state school fund which parcelled less than $300 per district every year without distinction as to need. Few schools had been built since 1900. School construction per pupil enrolled was just one-fifth of the national average. Teacher salaries and standards were below the national average. Attendance for both races was dismal, with blacks averaging about seventy days per year outside Wilmington. In 1918, Leonard Ayres placed Delaware thirty-eighth in the nation in his famous index of public school quality.

There was little educational opportunity beyond grammar school for Delaware youth in 1918, although it was particularly limited for blacks who had only two complete secondary schools available to them, Howard High School in Wilmington and Delaware State College near Dover. Since the latter was a trade and agricultural institute primarily of grammar school level, Delaware's blacks therefore had to travel to Wilmington to obtain a four-year academic or business secondary education, a practical impossibility for most black youths.

There was also a blatant lack of white financial support for the black schools. Except for used lumber given by the Freedman's Bureau in 1866-1867 and some private funds provided by the Delaware Association for the Moral Improvement and Education of the Colored People, Delaware's blacks were left almost on their own. Despite the accession of state funding for black schools in 1881 with a $2,400 grant for school operations, there was still no regular state support for black school construction in 1918. If Delawareans were so intent on maintaining decentralization that they had destroyed the twelve-year-old state superintendency in 1887, leaving a weak county system to supervise all but the fourteen town systems.


The work of the Delaware Association is explained in Harold C. Livesay, "Delaware Negroes, 1865-1915" (Bachelor's Thesis, University of Delaware, 1966), and Jacqueline Jones, "The Delaware Association for the Moral Improvement and Education of the Colored People: Practical Christianity" (Bachelor's Thesis, University of Delaware, 1970).

blacks wanted to build a school or increase teacher salaries, they had to rely on their own meager property taxes, which were totally segregated by race. Perhaps if Delaware had seceded in 1861, northern foundations would have sent a Barnas Sears to negotiate financial and administrative assistance for the blacks with the local authorities. However, since there was no war devastation to overcome, no former slaves following an invading Union army to stimulate federal aid, no Reconstruction to excite local citizens toward change, Delaware was ignored by northerners.

Education for Delaware's blacks improved dramatically after 1918 because of two reasons—a revamped school code and the gifts of Pierre du Pont. The new school code by 1921 displaced the weak county system of schools with a streamlined state system of education that centralized public education and made widespread reforms more likely. The state also reserved a series of taxes for public schools that distributed funds without regard to race. Since the vast majority of school funds in Delaware were now raised from state rather than local sources, the rewards were enormous for the black schools.

Pierre du Pont's philanthropy provided the catalyst for physical improvements to Delaware's public schools, particularly for black schools. His $1,500,000 trust fund provided "seed money" for experiments and publicity for reforms through the Service Citizens of Delaware, 1918 to 1927. Typical of the group's work were the two 1919 George Strayer reports that insisted only eight of the almost 400 schoolhouses outside Wilmington were worthy of renovation.

7 Even wealthy Delawareans failed to assist Delaware's blacks in the post-Civil War era. Sophie du Pont, the wife of Admiral Samuel F. du Pont, sent large gifts to the deep South for black education. Sophie M. du Pont Papers, the Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 9, Series E and F, Eleutherian Mills Historical Library (hereinafter EMHL).

8 Martin M. Dougherty, *Studies in Taxation; Financing Education in Delaware* (Newark, Delaware, Bulletin No. 182, November 1932), 34.

None of the acceptable schools were black. Du Pont, believer in modern school buildings as the key to a skilled, moral, and responsible citizenry, realized that Delaware's school needs were prodigious. He therefore founded another philanthropy specifically designed to construct schools. The Delaware School Auxiliary Association (DSAA) became incorporated in 1919 with a $2,000,000 fund which eventually totaled $3,819,000 after five supplemental donations.\(^{10}\)

Du Pont intended to assist blacks and whites equally in proportion to the racial composition of Delaware's population. Therefore, twenty percent of the original fund was earmarked for black schools. The Strayer reports had indicated to du Pont that black schools were in even worse physical condition than white schools, so he announced an additional $500,000 gift solely for black school construction to supplement the original $400,000 fund for black schools.\(^{11}\)

With the swift efficiency usual to the president of the Du Pont and General Motors Corporations, he set the Auxiliary to work at once. He appointed trusted allies to an executive board of managers to oversee a survey of the black school population and to review and select school plans and sites.

Relying on outside experts for guidance, du Pont hired a team from Rockefeller's General Education Board to report to the State Board of Education as to the use of his funds for black school construction. The team made several suggestions, all but one of which the DSAA fulfilled. First, the small schools should be consolidated whenever possible, though limited to "natural consolidations" which were close enough not to need transportation. Building expenditure must be limited to the minimum consonant with modern educational facilities so that available funds would construct all the necessary black school buildings. Schools must not, however, be too cheaply


\(^{11}\) P. S. du Pont to the Trustees of the Delaware School Auxiliary Fund, Oct. 8, 1919, the Longwood Manuscripts, Group 10, File 712-15 (hereinafter PSDP plus the identifying file number), EMHL. The Colored Trust Fund was kept separate from the White Fund, although the trustees of both funds were identical. Du Pont even instructed the Trustees to keep the two racially distinct funds in separate cities to bar any confusion in the accounts.
built, because long-term maintenance costs must not be burdensome. Schools must serve a community function, with adequate playgrounds and a building suitable for use as a social center. There should be a high school for blacks in each county to permit equal access to secondary education. As to a procedure for action, the report stated that a complete survey should be made of all children living in each district to be served to determine the location of the new schools.  

During early 1920, the three county superintendents paid surveyors to locate black domiciles, while the Auxiliary moved rapidly to buy school sites. Despite some white opposition and delays caused by labor and material shortages and misunderstandings with state officials, the Auxiliary rebuilt virtually the entire black school system within four years. The DSAA constructed the black's schools in a cooperative arrangement with county and state school authorities or with special district authorities when building in the towns. The county or special district board of education initiated the procedure by requesting the Auxiliary's aid to construct a particular school, using du Pont's surveys to decide which schools were most in need of reconstruction. The Auxiliary then sent an engineer to locate a suitable site in terms of current black residency, drainage, and proper size and shape of acreage. The engineer submitted the proposed site and topographical survey to the state board of education that now controlled construction matters under the new code. After the state board approved the site, the Auxiliary secured site options. Then the Auxiliary architect, James Betelle of Newark, New Jersey, made the plans which were approved by the state board. The Du Pont Engineering Company or another firm built the school, and title was given to the state board upon completion.

12 The black school site survey was completed by the General Education Board-approved team of Frank P. Bachman, Charles H. Dillard and Jackson Davis and announced in the Nov. 7, 1919, Wilmington Evening Journal. The full report was given at Dover's black school on Nov. 14, 1919.

13 Untitled Resolutions, PSdP 712-32, EMHL. The State Board often passed resolutions that gave "tentative approval" by the Board to the Auxiliary architect's plans, contingent upon the Commissioner of Education's later examination. Such prior approval allowed the DSAA to begin construction at once.
Since the Auxiliary committed such large funds and energy to the necessary task of rebuilding all black schools, early DSAA expenditures for white schools lagged significantly behind that for black schools. This delay was not unexpected, because the procedure for white submission to the DSAA was more subject to negotiation since du Pont desired whites to tax themselves whenever possible to pay part of construction costs. However, the Auxiliary’s apparent favoritism toward blacks created tension between the races of which the Auxiliary’s leadership was aware. For instance, the DSAA and the state board had to be careful to build both white and black schools in a particular area. The Auxiliary postponed a black school in Seaford, Sussex County, because the state board noted that there was no immediate prospect of a new white school being constructed there.\textsuperscript{14}

Sometimes open hostility erupted against black school sites. Perhaps the nastiest disagreement concerned four acres bought early in 1920 for the Caesar Rodney consolidated black school, south of Dover. Although the local school board and the state board originally approved the site, the state board retracted their approval demanding a new site because of white opposition.\textsuperscript{15} Four years later, the black citizens of Caesar Rodney district requested that the Auxiliary help them construct a school. Obviously exasperated with the matter, Director Odell replied that the DSAA intended “to make no further investment in real estate” until they had disposed of the land secured in 1920.\textsuperscript{16} Pierre du Pont wrote a more conciliatory letter, reminding the black spokesman that the Auxiliary had twice found suitable sites only to have them rejected by the whites, and imploring him to “move the school board of Caesar Rodney” to select a proper site so that the school could be built.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14} “Report of President to Delaware School Auxiliary Association,” Apr. 13, 1921, PSdP 712-19, Box 2, EMHL.

\textsuperscript{15} P. S. du Pont to George B. Miller, on behalf of the State Board of Education, Mar. 19, 1920, ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} Joseph H. Odell to S. L. Conwell, Sept. 2, 1924, ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} P. S. du Pont to S. L. Conwell, Sept. 3, 1924, ibid. The 1920 site was sold in 1924 to a local white for the original price of $1,500. J. H. Odell to J. F. Allee, Sr., June 20, 1924, PSdP 712-19, Box 3, EMHL. Townsend colored school was another sore point, as the Auxiliary had to take options on five sites before finding one acceptable to whites.
White dislike of the Auxiliary for aiding blacks was so intense that it endangered the entire reform effort. As Director Odell wrote du Pont's personal secretary, "There is a very prevalent feeling that we have already spent too much on colored schools." The feeling was especially sharp where white schools had not been built. Odell stated his fear of that feeling, "because it might end in a form of race hatred from which Delaware has been completely free in the past." Odell was overly sanguine about Delaware's past, but his concerns were valid. Black schools had been burned in Delaware before by whites, and it could happen again.

There were other problems for the Auxiliary's school construction campaign, particularly the severe business depression which decreased the stocks' value upon which the Auxiliary depended for construction funds. High construction costs also threatened the Auxiliary's plan for rebuilding the entire black school system. At $16,000 per room, the earliest four black schools were inordinately expensive. If there was a culprit, it would most likely be du Pont himself, for he had instructed his architect to take no shortcuts. Du Pont realized that costs had to be reduced if all black schools were to be rebuilt. Therefore, school plans were standardized and certain "frills" were deleted from future schools. After 1920, black rural schools averaged a more reasonable $6,000 to $7,000 per room. With construction costs brought into line, the black school program was virtually completed by early 1923. Eighty schools with 148 rooms were built at a cost of $1,025,000. Only seven schools remained to be finished.

18 Joseph H. Odell to F. A. McHugh, June 8, 1923, PSdP 712-30, EMHL.
19 The Hockessin one-room school cost an exorbitant $21,000 to construct. Brick exteriors for these first DSAA rural schools helped to increase costs; later Auxiliary rural schools were frame. Ironically, the black Hockessin "palace" served as the basis for a Delaware case sent to the U. S. Supreme Court in 1952 which became incorporated into the landmark 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education, Topeka decision of the Court.
21 "Report of the President to the Delaware School Auxiliary Association," Jan. 1, 1923, PSdP 712-19, Box 3, EMHL.
Probably no other foundation or fund was able to secure both the rapid results and high quality construction of the DSAA, not even the huge Rosenwald Foundation. The Auxiliary's buildings used standardized plans, professional architects and engineers, and the most modern equipment available. Their construction was overseen from the central Wilmington office, complemented by field reports and frequent auditing. The DSAA black schools were solid structures expected to last forty years. They were therefore very expensive. Spending about $7,000 per room on frame dwellings (including sites, architect's fees and equipment) was far above that spent elsewhere in the South for black schools. Rosenwald's schools were normally constructed for less than $1,000, including a mere $300 investment by the foundation. These inexpensive structures were not necessarily bargains, however, and the 1920 Rosenwald self-study was critical of the lack of professional standards and poor construction that often resulted from local labor with minimal supervision. The officers of the Rosenwald fund tightened control from the Nashville office after 1920, but their administrative efficiency and construction quality only approached that attained by the DSAA from the beginning of its work.22

There was a price paid for the Auxiliary's efficiency. Despite an early attempt to work through the Delaware Negro Civic League in 1919 and 1920, local blacks had little influence on the location or construction of their new school.23 The DSAA located schools where their surveys told them the most children lived within a certain radius. Rosenwald schools, on the other hand, were built where the blacks requested them to be built. Local control by blacks was insured by the Rosenwald fund. Also, whites were not as likely to be disturbed by the site selection in the Rosenwald-aided schools since blacks were careful to build new structures in their own neighborhoods, not equidistant from a large number of black homes as in Delaware. Despite the lack of black citizens' control

22 The Julius Rosenwald Fund began in 1912, after Rosenwald visited Booker T. Washington and was elected to Tuskegee Institute's Board of Trustees. The Fund eventually helped to construct over 4,400 black public schools throughout the South by 1929. See Leavell, Philanthropy in Negro Education, 76–80, 109–117, 137–147.

23 The DSAA held local meetings for each race to obtain a consensus as to the most suitable site. If that site could not be bought for a reasonable price, however, the Auxiliary considered itself free to obtain another site without further local input. See the Lewes case, PsPdP 712–29, Box 3, Lewes Colored folder, EMHL.
over school sites, the many thankful letters from Delaware’s blacks and testimonial dinners given to Pierre du Pont provided some evidence that the black population was grateful for his largesse and considered the temporary diminution of local control a necessary complement to efficient and rapid school building without cost to them.24

The school surveys of 1918 and 1919 not only emphasized the necessity of new school buildings, but the need for consolidation of one-room schools into multiroom, graded buildings. Du Pont funded a consolidations study in 1919 which proposed combining eighty-eight black schools into forty-five schools, leaving only thirty-five one- or two-room schools.25 In fact, there was little consolidation. The vast majority of blacks lived downstate and in rural areas where they were widely distributed. Therefore, few blacks were located in sufficiently large clusters to make consolidation possible in many districts. Of the eighty-one black schools built by 1923, forty-four were one-room and twenty-five were two-room buildings. Only seven schools were truly consolidated, multigraded buildings, the largest being the seven-room Booker T. Washington School in Dover, the single black school constructed with an auditorium.26

The Auxiliary generally managed to replace the old one-room schools with better one- and two-room schoolhouses. The new schools were unquestionably safer, cleaner and more pleasant buildings than the old ones, and were closer to the students’ present homes. However, without transportation for elementary children, which du Pont and other whites ignored, there could be no effective consolidation outside of the town districts. For all his generous gifts, totaling $1,166,000 by 1924 for black public education, and $1,000,000 more for a new Howard High School in Wilmington two years later, du Pont was able to achieve comparatively little consolidation of rural black schools.27

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24 The largest gathering held in honor of Pierre du Pont was the testimonial dinner at the Hotel du Pont in 1924. Blacks also held a dinner for du Pont at Dover’s Booker T. Washington school.

25 “Consolidation of Schools for Colored Children,” PSdP 712–28, EMHL.

26 “Colored Schools Erected to Date,” Nov. 6, 1923, PSdP 712–19, Box 3, EMHL.

There was little white support for consolidation of rural black schools. A powerful economic argument for the maintenance of the status quo was contained in another school site support funded by du Pont.  

The report insisted that care must be taken not to disturb the distribution of the blacks, because "Delaware is singularly dependent on colored farm labor." Large, consolidated schools might be of "temporary advantage" to blacks, but if consolidation were pushed "it would tend to concentrate the colored population of the state in a relatively few centers." Population redistribution would be to the "economic disadvantage of the Negroes themselves" as well as to the whole state. Therefore, black schools should be consolidated only when they would be "within ready walking distance of the school children." None of the above standards were applied to Delaware's whites, and, in any case, restricting consolidations to "neighborhood schools" as a policy made numerous and effective consolidations impossible for Delaware's black population.

Because there were so few consolidations, du Pont's philanthropy achieved little improvement of black secondary education outside Wilmington, except for Delaware State College, despite a need for it. The General Education Board team of 1919 had noted an increased demand among blacks for secondary education that was not met. Therefore, they suggested that there be "at least two or three junior and senior high school centers in Sussex County" and "one or more similar centers in Kent and New Castle counties." Of the six suggestions for black education from the General Education Board report, only the secondary school expansion proposed above was disregarded. DSAA Director Odell passed the onus to the public authorities by stating that the sixth recommendation, being concerned with county industrial or high schools, was "a question of policy that can be decided only by the State Board of Education." The latter statement is suspect because the State Board certainly did not decide where the black elementary schools would be located, even though they eventually approved the school sites

28 The Dillard-Jackson-Bachman Negro School Site Report, PSdP 712–17, EMHL.  
30 J. H. Odell to George B. Miller, State Board of Education, Jan. 7, 1920, PSdP 712–17, EMHL.
and plans submitted by the DSAA. In any case, the Auxiliary trustees believed it impossible to build a system of high schools for black pupils extending over the entire state. It was proposed to support “one colored high school for the entire state... located in Dover,” until such time as the “educational aspirations of the colored people enlarge.” Later, when there were more eighth grade black graduates, it was argued there could be a high school for each of the three counties.31

The 1919 decision not to build several black high schools was fateful, for the Auxiliary completed its black construction work by the late 1920s and never changed its original determination. Although there were barely 100 black Delaware eighth graders in the fall of 1919,32 the DSAA could have exhibited leadership by expanding a few black schools to twelve years as white foundations were doing in other southern states. The Slater Fund, for example, assisted hundreds of black teachers in county industrial schools throughout the South which formed the nucleus for a public system of black secondary education.33 In Delaware, however, the Auxiliary denied all requests to add secondary school classrooms to black elementary schools. Delaware State College would have to suffice for blacks seeking secondary education outside Wilmington.

Founded in 1891 as one of the original Morrill-Nelson land grant black colleges, Delaware State had been practically ignored by the legislature or any other white Delawareans. Legally a secondary school, most of its students before 1912 were below ninth grade. Even by 1919, few of the 110 students were of secondary level.34 Delaware State was, at best, a pale reflection of Tuskegee Institute. Although blessed with 200 acres of good farm land, the curriculum was neither an effective academic nor agricultural training course. And as a report by George Strayer and N. L. Englehardt of Columbia Teacher’s College noted in 1919, all structures were of such poor

31 “Consolidation of Schools for Colored Children,” PSdP 712-28, EMHL.
33 Leavell, Philanthropy in Negro Education, 120.
34 “Information Concerning the State College for Colored Students,” Delaware State College, 1927, PSdP 712-30, EMHL.
quality as to be a danger to the inhabitants. The buildings were worn out, there was no sewer or water system, and there was no attempt at a modern accounting procedure.

Pierre du Pont answered an appeal by the college’s trustees to help the school. Within a decade, du Pont provided $102,000 to rebuild all structures, provide water and sewage facilities, a two-room school for teacher training, a new manual training facility, and a totally new accounting system with a bookkeeper who served until 1929. By September 1, 1924, du Pont’s assistance had doubled the college’s assets to $193,917.62. Most important for the long term development of the college, du Pont and his colleagues convinced the legislature to increase state funds for the institution. State aid for operations increased from $8,000 in 1919 to $21,000 in 1926. In 1927, again thanks to the intervention of du Pont and friends, the college received a state capital appropriation for a $125,000 manual training building, which was supplemented by $60,000 DSAA money. Delaware’s public authorities had now accepted the college as an institution fully qualified to receive state aid for construction as well as for operations.

Secondary education was not a total disaster for Delaware’s blacks during the 1920s, though it remained restricted. While there were only eighty-eight black high school students outside Wilmington enrolled in 1919–1920, there were 587 in 1929–1930. The latter figure represented nine percent of the total black enrollment in Delaware’s public schools, twice the South’s average for blacks. The distribution of student enrollment was unbalanced, however, as over eighty percent of Delaware’s secondary students attended...

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36 Financial Statement of State College for Colored Students, Dover, Del. (Jan. 1, 1924, Sept. 1, 1924), ibid.
Howard High School in Wilmington. For the vast majority of rural blacks in the southern counties where most lived, secondary education remained as inaccessible in 1930 as in 1918.

One should remember, though, that Pierre du Pont was not primarily concerned with black education. He moved rapidly to build schools for blacks so that whites would rebuild their own schools. As he admitted to Drew Pearson later, the Auxiliary's function was to cajole whites into matching his gifts with increased school taxes and bonding so as to form the impetus for rebuilding the entire Delaware school system. Unfortunately for du Pont's good intentions, Delawareans were extremely suspicious toward an outside agency such as the Auxiliary which was not politically accountable to them. Therefore, as du Pont confided to Pearson, "We tried another tack." He offered to rebuild all black schools, so that the whites, "Not wanting their children to attend poorer schools than the Negroes, immediately became interested in education." If persuasion through guilt would not work, as presented in the Auxiliary's surveys, then perhaps embarrassment might. Whites would hate admitting that black schools were superior to their own. 39

Other factors were also present. By building all black schools with his funds, du Pont relieved blacks of a heavy tax burden that they would have had to bear if their lower property values were used to repay school bonds. Furthermore, by constructing all black schools himself, du Pont believed that he had stolen one of the most pervasive arguments whites had against using public monies for schools: that white money would be used for black children. 40

Du Pont's strategy toward whites was moderately successful. White school boards submitted plans slowly. Enough districts applied that du Pont's two organizations spent $1,927,000 on white school construction by May 1, 1924, approximately equal to that given to black school reconstruction by 1930. Twenty-five white schools were constructed entirely or partially through Auxiliary funds by 1925. 41 While the number was small, many of the white schools were located in town districts where they would affect the

39 Interview of Drew Pearson with P. S. du Pont, draft of Aug. 31, 1924, PSDP 834, EMHL.
41 Annual Report of the Service Citizens, 1924, PSDP 688, EMHL.
largest number of students and where they would serve as a demonstration to all citizens of the "best" educational facilities available.

As important as new school buildings were, they were useless if children did not attend them. By 1919, Delaware was in the midst of an attendance campaign that brought school attendance up to the national average by 1920-1921. Du Pont assisted the campaign by financing numerous attendance awards and aiding parent-teacher organizations so that parents would support their schools. He also commissioned Richard W. Cooper to write detailed studies to suggest ways to improve school attendance. Although Cooper attacked rural schools generally, he was most critical of rural black school attendance which he believed caused massive school failure. He noted that almost forty percent of Delaware's black students failed to be promoted each year; that nonpromoted black pupils averaged only seventy-eight days attendance; that more black first graders failed than were promoted to second grade; and that one-half of all black pupils were in grades one and two. Delaware's blacks were, on the average, two years behind grade level by third grade. Equal educational opportunity was clearly a myth for black youth of the early 1920s.

Why did blacks miss so much school? According to the record cards which Delaware teachers completed for Cooper during the 1920-1921 school year, nonattendance was mainly caused by students choosing to work as farm or domestic laborers, with parental indifference, distance from school, frequent transfers and illness all playing a part. Economic reasons were the most powerful deterrent to school attendance. Most parents of black migrant and farm tenant children expected them to work whenever the various grain, fruit, and vegetable harvests occurred. Since much of this work

43 Richard W. Cooper and Herman Cooper, One-Teacher School in Delaware, A Study in Attendance, Service Citizens of Delaware (Newark, 1925), 23, 68.
44 R. W. Cooper and H. Cooper, Negro School Attendance in Delaware (Newark, Del., 1923), and R. W. and H. Cooper, The One-Teacher School in Delaware (Newark, Del., 1925). Richard Cooper directed most of the information gathering for the Service Citizens. He also administered specific education programs such as the campaigns for increased attendance and parent-teacher organization.
began in May and continued into September, rural children were slow to enter school and quick to leave. Also, strawberries and other crops ripened throughout the year, aggravating attendance problems.46

Cooper believed the answer to school absenteeism was enforcement of the compulsory attendance laws. However, the state legislature had abolished state attendance officers in 1921. Therefore, since truant officers were illegal, du Pont funded visiting teachers in each county under state board control to supervise rural education through persuasion.47 The combination of state guidance, better school buildings, increased vocational and agricultural education and du Pont's visiting teachers complemented the renewed citizen concern generated by the education reform effort of the late 1910s and early 1920s. School attendance rose rapidly. By 1930, rural black youth averaged 144 days of daily attendance a year, a 100 percent increase in fifteen years.48

Delaware's financial position improved during the 1920s as much as the school attendance figures. The 1921 school code assigned several lucrative state taxes solely to education, with the result that the school fund had a surplus of more than $2,600,000 by 1924.49 When the governor appointed du Pont as State School Tax Commissioner in September 1925, matters improved further. He quickly made the operation more efficient and enforced tax laws heretofore largely ignored. School tax collections increased rapidly. Du Pont's tax collecting ability meant that there was plenty of state money for the operation of schools for both races. Lush tax revenues also made possible the virtual equalization of teacher salaries and classroom loads by 1930. Whereas black teachers received, on the average, only fifty-five percent of the salary of white teachers in 1917–1918, black teachers outside Wilmington

46 Rural black children living more than four miles from school managed only forty-five average days attendance annually. See R. W. Cooper and H. Cooper, Negro School Attendance in Delaware, 249.
were just ten percent behind white colleagues by 1929–1930. In Wilmington, black public school teachers actually outearned white teachers.\textsuperscript{50}

Du Pont’s efforts, in combination with modifications in the state school code, increased the likelihood that a black youth could become literate in a safe and sanitary school building, taught by a reasonably prepared and paid teacher. But one must ask whether du Pont’s philanthropy created harmful side effects that counteracted his obvious good works. Specifically, was his philanthropy democratic and did it operate to foster independence from or dependence upon private funding?

The evidence is that du Pont’s philanthropic agencies worked through the constituted public authorities. Desiring to produce permanent change, du Pont realized that excessive external coercion would result in massive refusal to change habits. Unlike some northern foundations that sent agents who operated independently from the state school organization, the DSAA and Service Citizens let the local authorities initiate the action. However, did du Pont’s gifts really change the habits of Delawareans in their attitude toward black education by producing a white commitment toward equal educational opportunity for both races so that blacks were no longer dependent upon nonpublic funding? Unfortunately, the latter was not the case. Because du Pont built virtually the entire black school system in Delaware without state support, whites did not take on the responsibility for permanent improvement of black education. Even before 1930, du Pont was complaining to state authorities that DSAA-built schools were not being maintained properly.\textsuperscript{51} Whites treated the new black schools as gifts to be accepted, but the acceptance was not viewed as a challenge to improve education further for blacks. In fact, by giving Delaware over more than eighty black schools, du Pont made the wholly segregated school systems more viable.

Despite the unfortunate consequences for long-term integration, du Pont’s contributions gave Delaware’s blacks hope for the future.


\textsuperscript{51} P. S. du Pont to State Board of Education, Jan. 22, 1927, PSdP 712–17, EMHL.
The rights of the black minority to a decent schooling in educationally viable structures, no matter how limited, was ensured by the intervention of a local philanthropist. Since the first integrated public school in Delaware public school history was not until 1952 and no national foundation or fund was interested in massive assistance to Delaware, there is probably no way that blacks could have realized anything close to equality in school facilities without the gifts and guidance of Pierre S. du Pont.

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